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News-Letter

Edited by
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IN NOVEMBER the Archbishop of York opened a Debate in the House of Lords on the increase of crime. He took his facts from the Criminal Statistics of England and Wales for 1947. The number of crimes known to the police, both detected and undetected, was 283,000 in 1938 and 498,000 in 1947. These figures included an increase in almost every type of crime: 36 per cent in larceny, 88 per cent in breaking and stealing, 141 per cent in receiving stolen goods, and 58 per cent in violence.

The most serious aspect of the increase is the age of the persons committing crimes. Forty-one out of every hundred persons convicted of larceny were under the age of twenty-one; of every hundred persons found guilty of breaking and stealing fifty-two were under the age of seventeen. "Those figures," said the Archbishop, "show a position of great gravity. It really means that the old homely virtues of honesty and truthfulness are vanishing." He ended by a suggestion that the State might consider adding a "drive" for honesty and truthfulness to its existing drives for greater production, greater safety on the roads, and other social objects.

The Lord Chancellor brought to the debate figures for the first six months of 1948. The increase in convictions for theft in the age group under seventeen showed, he said,

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an increase of 30 per cent on last year. "For my part," he said, "I blame not the schools and not the Churches—I put the responsibility primarily on the parents. If the first five or seven years are wrong, and if the right sort of instincts are not inculcated in the children, it is not fair to expect the parson or schoolmaster or any other person to do it afterwards."

Following this debate, *Punch* published a full page cartoon entitled "The Culprits". The tearful mother is being comforted by a slightly puzzled father, as through the window a policeman is seen leading off a young offender. The same issue of *Punch* contains two drawings to illustrate jokes about bank hold-ups and one about robbery with violence. *Punch* is a very interesting index of British middle-class taste, Drunkenness, the stock-in-trade of comic post-card humour, is nowadays regarded as a subject unfitted for laughter in the pages of *Punch*. Drunks are bad form: but thugs, bandits, swindlers are apparently laughter-making British types. *Punch* deals not only in laughter-making but in pointing a moral finger. The parents of potential thugs are "culprits".

Is this not an extraordinarily interesting illustration of an unconscious trend in modern thinking about wrongdoing? Crimes are committed, and the almost normal reaction is to send everybody looking for somebody or something other than the criminal on whom to lay the blame. One suspects that behind the search for scapegoats there is the fear that juvenile crime might get out of hand. But while the contestants may argue (which is easy enough to do, seeing that there is no means of proving the point) whether the war or the schools, or shortages, or the increase of Government orders and controls are responsible for increasing crime, they will usually greet the suggestion that, after all, it is the way parents handle their children that is responsible, with the air of having at once solved the problem of cause and discovered a fairly simple cure. Homes are not what they were, and therefore young people are not what they were: but here the ranks of the parent castigators divide, for while some think that there has been too little discipline, too much

sparing the rod and spoiling the child, too few of the ten commandments, others say that there has not been enough affection and security surrounding the child.

To that matter we will return later in this News-Letter, but meanwhile why is there such willingness to blame the parents? Is there not abroad in the minds of many people to-day a suspicion that parents are a pampered class, whose children are not only educated free of charge but are given milk and provided with meals at low cost? For this reason the Lloyd Roberts Lecture delivered in Manchester on October 28th by Mr. R. M. Titmuss, and reproduced in a recent number of *The Lancet*, is timely and revealing. Mr. Titmuss is a specialist on population statistics, but his interest is as much in the quality as in the quantity of family life. We have seen, he says, a vast growth in welfare, and this has included a certain number of "gestures" towards the family, e.g., family allowances, but these hide the real position which is that couples with young families to bring up are at present hard put to it to make ends meet. The Oxford Institute of Statistics estimated recently that Mr. Seebohm Rowntree's figure of the cost of basic human needs for a family of five was 83 per cent higher in March of this year than at the end of 1936. But children's allowances and married couples' allowances in respect of income tax remain the same, while the allowance for a single person has gone up from £100 to £110. Last year a new cost of living index replaced the basic but frequently readjusted index of 1904. The 1904 index was based on a family of 5.6 persons including 3.6 children. The unit is now not the family but the household, and a so-called "average" working-class family by the new index contains only one child under the age of fourteen. Whereas the old index reckoned that 72 per cent was spent on food and clothing, the new one allows 44 per cent, and the "average" household to-day is expected to spend more on butter than on children's clothes. This means, says Mr. Titmuss, that the cost of children's clothes and shoes is so small an item in the index that a steep rise would have no effect on the index, though it would land thousands of families in very severe difficulties.

Similarly, a rise in the cost of food, which is a very large item of expenditure in a house with children, would not affect the index substantially until it became a very big rise in cost. His conclusion is that a great many generalizations are made about the economic standards of family life which are based on such irrelevant facts as that some people spend a lot of money on tobacco. The plain fact is that since the middle of the 'thirties no really careful work has been done about the cost of family life. We are living on suppositions and on facts and figures which really apply to individuals. We are giving lip service to the idea of family life and deluding ourselves with the thought that families are having a comparatively easy time. Society expects of the family the basic training of young people, but disregards the fact that never in history has the family been expected to do this in isolation and alone, because always in the past it has had "the support of custom, religion, and community life".

The charge against parents that their handling of young children is chiefly responsible for the delinquencies of seventeen-year-olds may be partly due to the large and probably exaggerated importance which modern psychology lays upon the first seven years of a child's life. One example of the kind of stress which is laid on the relationship of mother and child for future social behaviour may be taken from an article in a recent number of *The Times Educational Supplement*, in which the writer, after saying that the mother-child relationship is "the basis of all social behaviour", continues in these words: "Early in the child's life this relationship tends to go wrong, for in our patriarchal culture the mother will generally conform to the social customs prevailing in her own childhood. The child must also conform to these customs. If he does, he is good and he is loved, but if he does not the mother will say he is acting badly and withhold the flow of natural affection." This is the kind of belabouring to which young parents are nowadays subjected. Anybody who has had anything to do with child guidance knows the tragedies in the lives of some young people which have their undoubted cause in

their relationships with their mothers in early childhood, and it is pointless to deny and ungracious to minimize the help given by the expert in child guidance to young people such as these. But imagine the above quotation read, not by fellow psychiatrists or by educationists, but by young parents. The suggestion is that the mother-child relationship "tends to go wrong". They are threatened with the alienation of their children's affections in a relationship which is extremely dear to them, which they are told they may be unwittingly causing by inculcating social customs as part of "our patriarchal culture". It is not clear whether these social customs are brushing the teeth or observing the ten commandments: that is left vague. What is definite is the threat and its association with bringing up a child as one was oneself brought up.

It scarcely needs to be argued that young parents do not take their ideas on how to bring up children mainly from their own parents. Where two generations share living accommodation, differences of view on child rearing are a frequent cause of acute tension. Where do young parents get the basic ideas on bringing up children from? They are probably the most biddable element in society, so great is their anxiety to do their best for their offspring. Two ideas have for them priority above all others. One is the supreme importance of physical health. The medical profession, backed by the State and Local Authorities, by the radio, by the women's columns in magazines, has revolutionized the physical upbringing of children in the last twenty-five years. Second to this, the idea which has been most dinned into the heads of young parents is the necessity of personal affection and the fear that any break in it may do irreparable damage to the child. Writing out of a long experience, the headmaster of an approved school said that the most frequent remark passed to him by parents about children who had been sent to him was: "I cannot understand it. I have never denied him anything."

As Mr. Eliot points out in his *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*,¹ this idea of the supreme importance of personal

¹ Faber and Faber, 10s. 6d.

affection between parent and child has obliterated for the child the sense of the family, of a larger, perhaps less personal, unit, with customs, a way of life, a little history, a little property, to which the child is proud to belong and called to acknowledge a loyalty. It is far easier for a child to pass from this conception of family to the larger idea of obligation to society, than it is to grow outwards from the unique relationship of mother and child to the heterogeneous larger community.

CHRISTIANS AND COMMUNISM IN CHINA

By the kindness of a friend we are allowed to publish a few extracts from a letter from a Christian in China. It will be well understood that it is not possible to disclose or give a hint of his identity.

“I believe that Communism in China is practically important, not theoretically dreadful. As a people we have never been philosophically inclined, caring very little for metaphysical doctrine. As Christians we have not even produced a Chinese theology. But we are always practical and tolerant, knowing that all things change and that nothing, whether ‘isms’ or institutions, can long continue without alteration and modification. Consequently Chinese intellectuals do not fear Communism in its philosophical aspects, with its materialistic and deterministic tendencies.

“Our history has revealed to us that our people, being oppressed and down-trodden, need a revolution in the Chinese sense (as taught, for instance, by Mencius). They have been for some time led in such a revolution which it seems to me cannot be averted by any external force. Agrarian reforms and the down-fall of feudalism are necessary and must come before it is possible for the nation to enter into a real process of reconstruction. Just now, we cannot think of anything else. We have indeed to endure and to suffer; but who in China to-day do not? Why should we be specially privileged and be exempt from suffering, when our fellow countrymen are facing dangers of every kind every minute? We shall painfully see many values that we hold dear discarded; but I have the confi-

dence to assure you that all real values, though discarded for a time, will be called back. The important thing is that we be not selfish, fearful, fixed in our prejudices and retreating before possible opportunities ; that we bear our Christian witness faithfully and courageously ; and that we see and know without a doubt what essentially Christianity stands for. The strange thing is that what you consider ' bad news ' is taken here by nearly everybody as signs of hope. We are expectant, eagerly awaiting to see an experiment worked out wherein diverse ways of thinking may live together, and prayerfully launching out upon a spiritual adventure which, if it turns out successfully, may even make a contribution to the present international deadlock. Christianity faces a crisis which, in itself, should be purifying. We ought to know what Christianity essentially is. To me it is God's giving Himself in love to man through Jesus Christ the Word Incarnate, and therefore our giving ourselves in the spirit of Jesus to our fellow-beings. We need a reorientation, in which we can turn all the outwardness of our religion into true inwardness and again turn this powerful inwardness into acts of service. Jesus is the Word of God, and we too are words. Christianity and the Christian community will continue and even grow as that which is corrective of errors and as that which is prophetic in the up-building of the spiritual life of our people. Christianity is also a personal relation between man and Christ, and it is meant to become right personal relationships in society.

"Our school is definitely staying on and I believe will continue to function, with adjustments, venturing upon the task of witness-bearing in love in the midst of difficulties. There were suggestions that we move to some safer place. Just now other schools are in a state of consternation, ours should all the more stand firm. We must take our Christian stand with the churches here which cannot move away and which we profess to serve. We have, of course, to take the consequences. If Christianity is a religion which cannot meet dangers and even persecution, of what use is it for us to embrace it ?"

Kathleen Bliss

CHRISTIANITY AND THE MODERN WORLD VIEW—VI

REDEMPTION

By H. A. HODGES

IN the concluding section of the preceding Supplement we indicated some of the anticipations which Christ fulfils. In these we included more than the idea of revelation ; in addition to this we included ideas which belong to the sphere of redemption. It is time now to pick up this thread too, and see what facts of experience, when brought into relation with a religious or metaphysical presupposition, give rise to the cycle of ideas which centres on this hope.

The facts are, of course, the familiar ones of evil in life, and the hope of relief is grounded in the inference which we noted earlier as the basis of all eschatology ; if God is God, the facts of our present life are not the final facts. Again, we argued that the word which God speaks to us in historical situations must be implicitly a word of promise. If He then goes so far as to speak to us more directly by revelation, it is natural that this word too should include a promise and be backed by a deed. What would the promise and the deed have to be ?

THE TRAGIC ELEMENT IN LIFE

Man is a maker, a civilizer, always building an ordered world of his own inside nature, and always liable to have it overthrown by forces beyond his control. Such may be the forces of nature herself, operating simply as death-dealing accident ; famine, earthquake, disease, and the like. Or they may include the forces of human nature, psychological and social forces, which work deep down below the conscious level and whose behaviour is therefore unpredictable and uncontrollable. These forces may at one time range themselves with the culture-building intelligence and give it creative power, but at another time they may turn against it in a tangle of destructive passions. Cultures and societies then perish from internal causes. It must be largely, though not wholly, to such causes that we should ascribe the most subtle and discouraging malady from which human life

can suffer: the tendency of human actions to turn round upon themselves and bring about the reverse of what they are meant to effect. Goodness, against its proper nature, brings forth evil, and right choices lead us into wrong actions. Man's consciousness of this danger has nowhere found fuller expression than in the poets, especially in tragedy, and from them I shall take examples of what I mean.

It can happen, if Fate wills it so, that our best qualities become our ruin, and the good man dies because of what is good in him. Homer's Achilles has this fate: he may live long in inglorious ease, or become a good and great man (by Homeric standards) at the cost of dying young. We approve the choice he makes in this situation, but we cannot approve the situation itself. Shakespeare knows something of the same kind in the moral sphere, viz. that the best things in us may, in some circumstances, be the causes of our ruin or corruption. Macbeth's vivid imagination betrays him to the tempter, and Othello's trustfulness puts him at the mercy of Iago. Situations of this kind, where the good turns round and destroys us, are a desperate problem for morality and religion. I call them tragic situations, because it is the poets who have faced them most boldly, and in poetry they necessarily take the form of tragedy. Philosophy, I regret to say, too often shuts its eyes, or pretends that somehow all is well.

There is another type of tragic situation, worse than this, where the very act by which we mean to do right puts us in the wrong. This may happen through a conflict of duties, as it happens to Orestes in the Trilogv, or to Antigone in the play that bears her name. Or it may happen through accidental ignorance, as in the case of Oedipus—not Freud's Oedipus, but the Oedipus depicted by Sophocles, who does all his unhappy deeds in the process of trying to avoid them or to do something else. Warned by an oracle that he is to bring disaster on his parents, he runs from Corinth to avoid them, and unknowingly runs straight into them at Thebes; he tries to do justice by cursing the unknown murderers of Laius, and the curse comes upon himself; everyone who tries to help him pushes him further into the pit. In the end, without apparently having gained anything in wisdom or virtue to justify his tribulations,

irrationally as ever he is taken into the favour of heaven, and his dead body is sacred. The moral of his story is that, however much we may wish to do the will of God, we cannot, because facts over which we have no control have settled it otherwise. We are morally impotent, the sport of impersonal forces which turn our actions round against themselves and fulfil the opposite of our intentions.

This Oedipus is not a mere fable; his trouble is that of all mankind. Our own generation has had to learn anew the ambivalence of human actions, whereby the very deed which is meant to remedy an evil sets another in its place, or the doing of good brings evil with it. And here again we have something which the philosophers have not always faced. But the poet Sophocles knew it, and his verdict was that "the best thing of all is, never to be born". Modern philosophy, in the persons of Hegel and Marx, has pretended to recognize the facts, but has twisted them into the shape of a dialectic which promises an ultimate solution. There are no lasting solutions in real life, only perpetual tensions between the good will and the claims which it has to meet or the facts upon which it has to work.

No one feels the pinch of tragedy more than the would-be servant of God. To the mere humanist, trying to build up a decent pattern of life, it is bad enough, but to the believer in God it is the frustration of higher ambitions than that. It is in his mind to dedicate all his actions to the service of God; and since God is the ideal and above the ideal, He can properly be served only by an act, or rather a life-long series of acts, altogether good and infinitely significant. Such an act, or such a life, and only that, would be a fitting tribute to God. Even if we could do this, we should still have to confess ourselves, in the words of the Gospel, "useless slaves", who "have merely done what we ought". But in fact we find ourselves ignorant, impotent, subject to tragic fate, and the service which we try to render to God is beyond our power. By being what He is He sets us an infinite task; and by letting the world be what it is He makes the task doubly impossible.

IS THERE A WAY OUT OF THE IMPASSE?

Is there any way out of this *impasse*? One way which is sometimes attempted is that of withdrawal into another world, a

plane of life and action on which the tragic problems do not arise. This is the hope of the pietist, the sectarian, the purist, who tries to avoid guilt by avoiding responsibility, and is therefore driven in varying degrees to sever himself from society, or even to abstain from active life, cultivating an inner life in himself. But it is impossible thus to avoid responsibility. Abstention from action is itself an action, and withdrawal from society has social consequences. The purist by the very fact of keeping aloof incurs that guilt which is the reverse side of his fancied innocence, and so runs into a tragic situation of his own.

Perhaps it may be said that tragic situations are a mark of social immaturity, and can therefore be progressively removed by the improvement of social institutions. But while some such situations are certainly amenable to this treatment (Orestes' dilemma could not occur in that form after the suppression of the blood-feud), the history of human institutions strongly suggests that the removal of one set of conflicts does no more than set the stage for others. But perhaps, again, this is due to the continuing presence of ill-will or sin in our midst, and the way out of tragedy will be found in the eradication of sin, or (to put it in more modern terms) in the continuing moral progress of mankind. This may be so, but it is cold comfort for those who have to live in the sinful world that now is, and who see how far mankind is from making any detectable progress in the abolition of sin. Besides, it is not certain that the evil of tragedy does arise wholly from sin, though of course the tragic situation can be made still worse by the ways in which sinful men react to it. But it seems to be inherent in finitude and the ignorance and weakness which go with it. Its roots grow not in the human will as such, but in the very foundations of the universe. That is why the Greeks ascribed it to an impersonal Fate, to which even the gods were subject.

GOD ALONE CAN SUPPLY THE ANSWER AND HAS DONE SO

How can man be delivered from this world of death? Only if he can put himself under another government, if Fate can give place to Providence. In the long run the question what God means by asking the impossible, or by letting good become a source of evil, can be answered only by God, and it is He who must reveal the right way to approach these things.

Christianity affirms that He has done so in the history of Israel and the Church. Here He has inserted into history a divinely guided community which embodies and diffuses that form of life which is His real purpose for us.

The idea of a life singled out from the general run of the world and placed under the special providence of God meets us first in the story of Abraham. His whole life is built on a promise, and the promise is that his children shall become a nation under God's special protection. God undertakes to build up a community, called into existence by His special act, with its Law ordained by Him to shape its life and character in the proper direction. The life of Israel is to be richly blessed. It is to be the good life itself, not laboriously achieved by man, but freely given by God. Or so it seems. Yet Israel's history is one of continual failure to act or even to hope rightly. The fundamental tragic tensions appear in Israel as well as outside it, and are not resolved or transcended. Priesthood and prophecy come to be and remain at odds. The sabbatical law, Israel's glory, is a political and military menace. Misconceived as to its purpose and function, the whole Law nourishes national pride and exclusiveness, while inhibiting the growth of a free culture. Precept conflicts with precept, and justice with mercy. *Job* and *Ecclesiastes* are written and published, and the pessimism of the latter can compare with that of the pagan Sophocles. "I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive; yea, better than both did I esteem him which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun." Why then, we may ask, has *Ecclesiastes* a pious ending and *Job* a happy one? Was Israel also running away from the naked fact of tragedy? And for us what is the moral of the coming of tragedy to Israel? Simply, I think, that the problem cannot be dealt with by a mere re-ordering of life on this plane. Messiah must come from heaven and bring the New Jerusalem, which is in heaven; the evil of life can only be corrected by bringing in a new dimension.

The new dimension must be brought in without the old one being removed. It is no solution to escape from earth into heaven, and live a life, hidden in God, which makes no impact here. The Kingdom is not of this world, but it must be active

n this world, and give its citizens a quality of life in which tragedy is overcome. It must be in this world, with power and significance that overcome the tragedy of this world. And this, as the fate of Israel warns us, cannot be done simply by good legislation and moral instruction. Tragedy is in the build of things. The Kingdom must overcome it in the only way left open, viz., by taking it up into itself and transfiguring it. The tragic situation must be accepted and robbed of its sting.

To bring the problem to a point: God's will is above all that we can see or do, and yet we want, while remaining men, to become its organs. We need so to act in a tragic situation as, by accepting it, to rise above it into the freedom of God. Our act must have freedom and significance not by being rid of its limitations, but because of and in and through them. But this is only possible if God Himself gives a human act this power.

God the Son has done so, according to the Christian story, by performing the act Himself. He takes upon Himself limitation, not merely enduring it, but choosing it; being God, He becomes man, and as man He lives at first in poverty and insignificance. When He enters upon His public career, every good thing in Him and around Him is turned to His destruction. His virtue, which should attract men and does attract some, provokes in others the hostility which ends in His death. His life was to be lived and His teaching given in forms which lay themselves open to manifold and radical misunderstanding. At last He dies by violence, a painful death, accompanied by public disgrace, unjustly inflicted, with the mockery of a trial, and the highest religious tribunal of God's own people sentences God to death for blasphemy because He has said Who He is. Finally, on the Cross itself, the innocent Sufferer meets the ultimate dereliction of all, and feels Himself abandoned by the Father to Whom even Job in the story had not appealed in vain. Yet, while thus feeling in His own life the fullest weight of tragedy, He makes every incident of it an act of ready obedience to the Father, and so sets an example of creative and victorious suffering.

This is not all. If it were, He would still be no more than nobler Socrates. He would have shown us how to perish nobly, but He would still have perished and left us to perish. But by

thus obeying and submitting to the very end He wins the right and the power to rise from the grave in glory, and to enter on a new life beyond the sphere of tragedy and other evils altogether. He is still a human individual, still clothed in a recognizable human body, but now He is free to move at will through time and space, and is henceforth active everywhere with the full power of His Godhead. He has lifted humanity, in His own Person, on to a different plane of existence, and our humanity is exalted with His in so far as we become members incorporated in His mystical body. To this end He has set up the Church, with teachings and practices deriving from Himself, expressing in word and action the nature of the true life which God intends for us, and with supernatural powers to impart and sustain it. Moulded by these influences, we come progressively to share Christ's mind, to act and suffer like Him; and as we do so, our actions and sufferings become as it were incorporated with His, and become parts of the one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and oblation, the Act of homage offered to God by the only competent Agent, whose worth and significance are without limit.

We ourselves, limited on earth, are henceforward free and powerful in heaven, and this our power works, beyond what we ourselves know, for the redemption of all mankind. But the results are partly visible even now in our changed relationships with other people; for when we pray in the person of Christ, there is no limitation upon our prayer such as there would be if it merely expressed our own desires. Prayer that is only the pouring out of our own desires is limited and spoiled by our ignorance and ill-will. It is then that prayers can conflict, and God's petitioners appear before Him flourishing a whole array of claims and counter-claims. But prayer in the person of Christ and in the power of the Spirit is prayer for the fulfilment of the work of Christ; all details, if we care to mention any, are meant simply as instances and illustrations of that, and if He fulfils His work in ways which we did not expect or desire, we gladly accept the result, provided that His work is really done. And since we are full of ignorance and evil, and since the risen Christ is active everywhere and always on behalf of all that is good and against all that is evil, we are all the time implicitly praying

against something in ourselves and for something in our opponents. In prayer we stand, as in action we cannot, above the limitations from which the opposition springs. Knowing this, moreover, we are knit together in an increasingly real community even with those whom we do not understand or approve. This does not put an end to disagreement or even to conflict ; but it does take the malice out of them, since Christians, even when opposing one another most strongly, can see in one another the friends of God, and so be aware of a fundamental unity. Not only Christians, but often others too, can be caught up into this unity.

LIVING IN THE PARADOX

Christianity is so presented by some of its exponents to-day that many people think it offers nothing worth having. One who had grasped imaginatively what has been said might rather feel that it is too good to be true. And yet a more detailed examination of Christianity might lead even such a one to a certain disillusionment. For while it does offer freedom and power, it is a power to do and avoid things of a different order from much that is held worthy of pursuit or avoidance in this world. If we talk of knowledge and power, while offering a kind of knowledge which people have now long since despaired of, and remaining visibly unable either to command prosperity or to secure justice, we shall seem to talk paradoxes at the best, and nonsense at the worst. And the only way to meet this obstacle is by frontal attack. People must be told, for it is a central point of Christianity, that their present values are wrong, not merely those which they themselves recognize to be self-centred, but even those of which they are really proud, and that neither in this world nor in Christianity can these be realized at all. Christianity does not exist to satisfy them as they stand, but to correct them, abolishing some, reforming the conception of others, and bringing to life new desires and insights of duty which were not there before. We can say that the Christian life which results from this is a life preferable in quality to any other that man can live, a life of knowledge and freedom ; but it is a new life and in some ways a strange one, too.

The change from ordinary ways of looking at things to the Christian way is described in the New Testament by no less

violent a metaphor than that of death. We are to deny our present selves, to become dead to the world, to live only with Christ in God. What we shall be is so unlike what we are that at present we cannot really conceive it. This is true even of the Christian himself while still *in via*; it is even more true of the outsider. And this is a side of our message which is not always made clear. We talk of Christianity as solving the world's problems, but we do not talk of it as turning the world upside down. The amount of sheer renunciation that it requires is minimized. And yet it finds expression in the Bible, in the challenging figure of Job, not to say in the supreme challenge of the Cross. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," is a fine thing to say when we do not think He really will slay us; but the real doctrine is that, in the mystical sense, and sometimes even in the plain physical sense, that is just what He will do.

No one can receive the Christian life in its true form who has not been through the Christian death. No one can understand the meaning of the good news in Christ who has not willingly abandoned all hope of good news among the potsherds of Job. Between the natural man, who thinks he has claims on the world and arraigns God for not meeting them, and the Christian who praises God for His astonishing generosity, lies the death of the first man's claims. The case against God, on the natural man's grounds, is unanswerable. We make fools of ourselves if we try to answer it. It is God Who must answer the natural man, not by meeting his case, but by leading him to mortify in himself the grounds on which it rested. When we have thus abandoned ourselves and our notions of life, and thrown the whole away as rubbish in the presence of God, and stand naked to receive whatever He gives for the sake of God Who gives it, then we find to our surprise that, besides killing us, He also makes us alive, and that His generosity exceeds what we could ever have dreamed of. But it remains generosity in a strange coin.

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